



Chargé d’Affaires Robert Yamate
Remarks: GIST Boot Camp
Dakar, Senegal
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(As prepared)

Mr. Abou Lo, Minister of Communications, Telecommunications and ICT
Mr. Mohamed Tall, Representative of ARTP
Mr. Mor Athie, representative of the Conseil National du Patronat du Senegal (Senegalese National Employers Association)
Mr. Antoine Ngom, President of the Foundation of Incubators of ICT in Senegal
Mr. Ibrahima Wade, Director, Stratégie de Croissance Accélérée
Ms. Natalia Pipia, Senior Program Manager, CRDF Global,

Welcome to the Global Innovation through Science and Technology (GIST) – West Africa Startup Boot Camp.

Young people in West Africa need jobs. Individuals and businesses with good ideas need resources and encouragement. How better to help you achieve these goals than through providing opportunities to learn, connect, and succeed in business?

The U.S. Government is committed to supporting young leaders and entrepreneurs like you. The GIST initiative is part of a larger framework of economic growth activities President Obama called for during his 2009 speech in Cairo and has followed up with exchanges, networking projects, and competitions around the world, including in Africa. Here in Dakar, the U.S. Embassy funded nearly a dozen programs in 2011 to promote economic development, youth empowerment, and entrepreneurship.

GIST is about connecting innovative ideas, smart people, and financial resources. So far, some 40,000 members of our online community and more than 20 regional and country partners have come together through this initiative. It is great to have Senegal as the latest participant.

In sub-Saharan Africa, GIST is powered by Secretary Hillary Clinton’s LIONS@FRICA [*pronounced LIONS-AFRICA*] partnership. The African Development Bank, a Lions@frica partner, provided support that brought many of you here. Another partner, infoDEV, is helping build angel investment networks in countries like Senegal, allowing entrepreneurs to transform innovative ideas into products and companies by facilitating seed funding. You’ll have a chance to ask infoDEV questions first hand at the investment roundtable.

Just last month the State Department sponsored its third annual Young African Leaders program, an Innovation Summit and Mentoring Partnership that brought more than sixty social and business entrepreneurs from nearly every sub-Saharan African country to the United States for three weeks of professional exchange and hands-on business training.

In the months ahead, the United States will support African students competing in the SIFE World Cup in Washington, D.C. Through our LIONS@FRICA Partnership, we will launch DEMO Africa, a global platform that will connect African startups to international capital and partnership opportunities. We will also launch a new Apps4Africa challenge to foster creative uses of technology that can spur job creation throughout the Continent. And here in Dakar, we will equip young West African leaders with the advanced technical skills they need to support regional development through our Dakar-American Applied Research and Training (DAART) program.

Almost 100 of you have gathered today, hoping to enhance your business ideas and learn to pitch them to perspective investors. The winner of the Business Pitch Competition will have the opportunity to travel to the U.S. in October to meet with potential partners and investors and learn about entrepreneurship in America.

I look forward to hearing your enthusiastic stories and high-impact ideas. You are role models for your communities. You are innovative thinkers who take risks and then use your energy to make your dreams a reality.

In my view, you are all winners, and I encourage you to learn as much as you can, meet as many people as you can, and use your experiences over the next two days to transform your innovative ideas into successful ventures that create economic opportunity and address the pressing needs of Africa.

Finally, I would like to thank a number variety of partners:

Antoine Ngom, of ICT Incubators; Omar Cisse, Yann LeBeaux, and the Dakar staff of CTIC -- a fantastic partner, and well-known for its commitment to fostering entrepreneurs; Natalia Pipia and Amanda Gant from the CRDF Global team; and Jeffrey Margolis, is the recipient of the American Association for the Advancement of Science – Science & Technology Policy Fellowship which aims to bring scientific expertise to U.S. domestic and foreign policy decisions.

In closing, I want to leave you with some words of wisdom from President Obama. “...Soon enough, you will be the ones leading our businesses and our governments. You will be the ones making sure that the next generation gets what they need to succeed. You will be the ones charting the course of our unwritten history. And all that starts right now... So set your sights high.”

Thank you.